Mutiny Zine has been publishing anarcho relevant news & ideas since April 2006. It began as a project of the Mutiny direct action collective whose writing and actions have been detailed in past issues. We make a new issue every two months and try to make it as relevant as possible to revolutionary ideas and practice in Sydney and Australia. It is available in hard copy at both Black Rose Books in Newtown and Jura Books in Petersham. It is also distributed in most major cities around Australia and quite amazingly overseas as well. It is hosted on the Jura Books website jura.org.au/mutiny in web view and print form. If you would like to subscribe please cut out the form below and mail it to us with some cash for postage costs. Our collective is down to three members now if you like the project and want to help out please get in touch, we're really nice people who you probably want to get to know! Also we love getting feedback so tell us what you think of the Zine.
- Black Beard

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MUTINY

A PAPER OF ANARCHISTIC IDEAS & ACTIONS

#62 October / November 2011

O-C-C-U-P-Y!
Articles from Melbourne, Wellington & more

Interview with Aotearoa Workers' Solidarity Movement

Squatters evicted from St. Michael's college

The Superfluous Ones - precarious superheroes strike back!

Save Political Economy at Usyd

+ MORE INSIDE!

Editorial 62

Following in the footsteps of the Egyptian Revolution and the collective takeover of city squares in Spain and Greece, the last two months has seen the emergence of an Occupy movement across the world. Locally, there have been sizeable occupations in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Brisbane, as well as several in Aotearoa/New Zealand. While the Sydney and Melbourne occupations were brutally evicted by police (and, as we go to print, Occupy Brisbane has also been evicted - for the moment, activists have moved to another location), Melbourne was 're-occupied' last week and a second occupation will soon begin in Sydney.

We have been inspired by both the anti-systemic character of the occupations and the attempt to construct directly democratic forms of social organisation. Even though there has been a concerted effort to ridicule the movement for its lack of demands, the occupations have already succeeded in de-naturalising the class inequality and lack of meaningful democracy within our current social order. Forcing people to question such a reality is hopefully a small step towards collectively challenging and overcoming the capitalist system in which we live.

In this issue we offer several different articles related to the Occupy movement. James Pollard discusses the limitations of the slogans used by Occupy Melbourne, and suggests ideas for future activism. We think that the different occupations have enough in common for his ideas to be relevant outside of Melbourne too. From Wellington, Asher critiques the world view associated with conspiracy theories, and urges Occupy activists to avoid this political dead-end. Another article criticises the tendency to blame subjective human behaviour, such as greed, for inequality, exploitation and economic crisis, and argues that these are instead the result of structural features within capitalism.

In addition, Annette Maguire writes about the Superfluous Ones - a group of activists from Germany who disrupt gatherings of the rich and powerful. They provide an inspiring example of resistance. A report-back on the arrests of squatters who had attempted to create a social centre, providing for community needs, highlights the kind of police response that we can expect to face when illegally occupying spaces. 'Duck footed' discusses a recent action in support of the Sydney Uni Political Economy department. We continue our series of interviews about other radical publication by talking to Asher about Solidarity newsletter from Aotearoa/NZ. Finally, Tristan Epstein writes about protests last year against the COP-17 climate change summit in Cancun, Mexico. This piece highlights the difficulty in organising meaningful activism when the state is well prepared for dissent - in this case mobilising the military and thousands of cops to police protestors in Cancun. Instead it makes more sense to set a time and place of activists' own choosing, as the global Occupy movement has recently begun to do.

Syzygy

EDITORS FOR THIS MONTH: BlackBeard, L Dog, Syzygy.

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(The mutiny zine collective does not necessarily agree with all the opinions of contributors. Contributors do not necessarily agree with all the opinions of the mutiny collective. The mutiny collective doesn't agree with all the opinions of the mutiny collective.)

Review: Political Economy Rally at Sydney Uni

by Duck-footed

Another year, another campaign to save Political Economy at Sydney Uni. The school has been under attack since it first began in the 70s, with each University white paper, business plan and budget proposal threatening to cut courses, staff, or in the latest case, merge Political Economy with the school of Government.

For those who don't keep up with the latest from the ivory tower, the Dean of Arts has released a report that includes plans to merge ECOP and GOVT. While this may seem hunky-dory on the surface, it's just the latest in a series of assaults on the school of Political Economy. ECOP is the most politically radical department in the whole of Australia (in my opinion), and the only one in the whole of Oceania that looks at economics, social issues and philosophy as inter-related. It started up in the 70s when students protested for academic freedom to research and teach alternative theories of society, particularly Marxism and gender theory, although the field has broadened since then. Generally economics is treated as an apolitical mathematical science, but ECOP subjects critique capitalism, heteronormative gender relations, imperialism and social theory as the product of power relations. Hence to merge Political Economy and Government would be to combine class analyses of the State as an instrument of capitalist and patriarchal power with lessons on how to become a bureaucrat. And it would also reduce the independence of radical ECOP lecturers to set their own units and readings. It's just silly.

So last week on Tuesday, over a hundred students and staff rallied against the proposed merger. The protest was organised by the Political Economy Society, a group who usually limit themselves to armchair socialism in the form of weekly beers and the odd discussion of the interest rate. They did a great job of promoting the rally and organising all-in meetings in the lead up. Colourful banners, artful placards and well-worded speeches were stirring, although I couldn't help but wish that such talented organisers would offer their skills for use at more events, not just those aimed at protecting their own middle class academic interests. That isn't true of all that came along. I'm sure this is a first but not a last rally for many, lots of ECOPers are involved in other movements, and the usual trots trotted out in the usual way.

tend to focus on topics with that focus - industrial action being probably our most regular topic.

Over the last 12 months or so, we have seen a shift towards promoting people talking about their own lives and struggles - while we still have reporting and analysis of struggles that AWSM members don't take part in personally, members have also written about our own lives, and interviewed others about their experiences. I think that's been a really big improvement in the quality and value of Solidarity - as a space for people to talk about their own fights rather than just one for us to talk about things we're not necessary connected to. We have an open invitation in every issue for people to send in stories about their own lives and struggles too.

4. Have you any thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the newsletter?

Obviously as a small group its always going to be hard to get good distribution - between our members and some others who are happy to distribute the hardcopy newssheet in their centres, we've never gone above around 1000 printed copies of any issue, and our general print run is 500-700. In the larger scheme of things, this really isn't that great. Add in to that that we've rarely been able to find distributors in Auckland, by far the biggest city in New Zealand and it means that actually we're not reaching a huge chunk of New Zealand's working class. Internet distribution probably doubles our readership but even then we've got a long way to go.

Additionally, we don't get a lot of feedback from people who aren't already involved in radical politics. What little we have gotten has been positive, but its hard to really understand what we need to improve if people outside of our political circles don't get in touch and tell us.

On the other side of that, I have heard a few times from different groups of striking workers that we've written about that they really appreciate us publicising their struggles. I think its often a bit of a buzz for them when we interview them, and its always nice to see yourself in print. So that's a valuable thing, and also could help to build connections and respect for the future.

5. Do you have any ideas about how radical publications can collaborate and learn from each other?

I think more republishing would be good - I know we've republished the odd article from other sources (primarily libcom.org) and likewise others (including Mutiny) have reused articles from Solidarity. As internationalists, its important that even though we want out publications to be locally relevant, we also need to remember that the struggle for working class liberation is a global one, and so building connections between struggles at home and those overseas is important. As a part of this there could also be some cross-promotion, especially when publications have a crossover in desired audience.

Beyond that, I'm not really sure what else can be shared between publications. In theory I think that we should be helping each other more, but in practice I'm not sure what forms that could take!

6. Anything else?

If people are interested in subscribing to Solidarity, they should go to http://www.awsm.org.nz and fill out the form on the top right to be added to our email announcement list. If you're on Facebook you can go and like https://www.facebook.com/AotearoaWSM too. And please send us feedback, let us know what you think of Solidarity!

FOR DEMOCRACY AND DISCIPLINE

A plea to Occupy Melbourne in the days following the cowardly attack of the Victoria Police upon our fair encampment at the order of the princeling, Robert Doyle.

By James Pollard

Thanks for this piece go to: Maya for sharing her research, insight, and experience; Nat for having my back too many times to mention; Mike for helping me edit this piece and doing the layout [for the pamphlet version]; Everyone who stood on City Square that day, or supported us from the streets and around the world; And Robert Doyle for reminding us that we still have enemies. I hope I will be able to pay you all back, especially Robert Doyle.

The end of Occupy Melbourne

On the morning of the 21st of October, about 400 peaceful police, some mounted on peace ponies, others wielding peace spray, swooped down on City Square which had then been host to the camp of Occupy Melbourne since the 15th. The Lord Mayor Robert Doyle had announced earlier in the week that "it was time to move on." This is an article on the eviction of the occupation. In it, I try to show how certain assumptions and ways of action, crystallised in the chants we raised on the day of eviction, defined and limited what the occupation was. Throughout the week, a clique of liberal-pacifist activists attempted to impose these ideas upon the entire assembly, and to take control of the general assembly. In the wake of the eviction, their coup over the assembly has come to pass, leaving us in circumstances that demand reflection, re-organisation, and preparation before future action can be carried out with confidence.

"This is a peaceful protest!"

Leading up to, and on the day of, the eviction, the constant refrain of "peaceful protest" only hampered attempts at a serious iscussion of tactics. A discussion of tactics is not necessarily the endorsement of violence. It is an attempt to enable collective responses to the questions of how to respond to police violence, how to protect ourselves, and what is the best way to resist authority. I have seen the ideology of nonviolence used to end discussions on civil disobedience (which is somehow always "violent," even though the greatest figures of nonviolence were practicing

civil disobedience), and to discourage a pro-active reaction to the police (building barricades, or defending them, being categorised as "violent"). Moreover, it is unfair to credit the media victory on Friday to an ideology which I doubt is held by a strong majority of protestors; nonviolence is simply not accepted completely enough to explain a causal link. What we instead saw was a case of discipline: as a movement, we made a disciplined decision not to riot, in spite of vile attempts by the police to provoke us. Discipline must feature in our discourse from this stage on as being neither obedience, for discipline is actually worked out by a thousand instantaneous acts of consensus in the field, and grows out of a shared culture; nor ideological reductionism, for discipline is not afraid to examine alternative strategies, trusting in its own maturity to choose the appropriate tools of struggle. When I see a protestor talking another one out of attacking the police, I do not see the triumph of nonviolent ideology. I see the triumph of a disciplined resistance culture.

"Move forward slowly!"
-The chant we used as the cops charged us in the rear

The eviction went through three phases. First, there was a period of police investment(1) which lasted approximately three hours; second, there was a half-hour of assault; third, there was a slow retreat through the city, going up Swanston street in response to a series of charges by police, during which many were arrested, finally concluding at Trades Hall. Between the second and third phases there was the greatest danger of a riot, but also the greatest opportunity was lost. Two thousand people had come out in support of our movement: the moment was ripe for a mass experiment in democracy. But at that stage, due to a lack of prior planning for police violence, the movement was unable to act decisively. In the following hours of the slow retreat, the human microphone proved useless for creative decision-making, in fact quelching the independence of groups moving to seize nearby intersections as a defense against a second police kettle, and "had the effect of enforcing opinions as fact through repetition" as in Los Angeles (2). Eventually the process became dominated by those who could speak loudest (the ones with actual microphones). The

1. I use the technical term from siege warfare, during which the attackers surround the defending castle and move their siege weapons into place: in this case, a cordon around the camp which prevented reinforcements from intervening in the assault. During this time, the police also cleared all protestors from Swanston street, outside the camp, which was later used as a dumping ground for [property that was removed].

2. https://unpermittedla.wordpress.com/2011/10/03/the-general-assembly-and-grassroots-democracy/

AWSM
aotearoa workers solidarity movement

Syzergy's Interview with SOLIDARITY

1. Why did you decide to start the publication? What are your political objectives?

When we formed the Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement (AWSM) back in October 2008, we decided that one of the things we wanted to do was a free monthly newssheet. We were definitely inspired by some of the other similar projects done by anarchist-communist groups in other countries, like Resistance (published by the UK Anarchist Federation) and Workers Solidarity (by the Irish Workers Solidarity Movement).

As AWSM is a group spread across the length of New Zealand, Solidarity was seen as a good national project, one to help us all get used to working together, while simultaneously spreading our ideas and publicising struggles that would otherwise be ignored.

Politically, AWSM is an anarchist-communist organisation, so Solidarity is one way in which we can help promote anarchist-communist analysis of current events and society as a whole. It also gives us the chance to reach an audience who wouldn't necessarily search for our website, but might pick up a copy of the newssheet at a library, community centre or cafe.

2. How difficult has it been to find the resources needed for a publication, e.g printing, writers, people to do lay-out, etc

Financially we've been fine, as all AWSM members contribute 2% of our income as dues to help fund our work. Combined with donations, this has been sufficient for us to print more or less as many copies as we are realistically able to distribute.

The biggest issue has certainly been content. We are a small group, and we're all busy people - most of us work full or part time, some study as well and some have children. In the 33 months since our first issue came out in February 2009, we've managed to put out 17 issues of Solidarity. So, despite a target of being monthly, the reality is we've only really done a little better than one issue every 2 months. At our recent national conference, we decided that from now on we will only publish bimonthly, as we feel that is a more realistic target to meet until the organisation grows large enough to support more.

3. In Mutiny it sometimes feels like articles in the zine are just what people are writing about generally, rather than having a set of criteria for content. Have you tried to prioritise publishing articles around particular themes? For what reasons?

The first issue of Solidarity contained several articles around the theme of water issues. I think from memory that was the original plan - to have 2-3 articles on a particular theme in each issue, with the rest of the articles on other topics. That issue also had a profile of a particular campaigning group, which was also intended to be a regular feature each month. The second issue had the first part of a series introducing anarchist-communist theory. None of these 3 things continued on beyond one issue. So yes, there is certainly a feeling that the content is just whatever people end up writing.

At the same time, we do tend to have discussions around possible topics for articles, and people suggest things that they think would be good to cover even if they can't personally write the article themselves. As a class struggle group, we obviously

helicopters armed with everything from sticks to hand grenades. This was where we stopped. The Via actually stopped a couple of hundred meters short of this barricade, to avoid a punch up. This prompted some punks to make a "via campesina, sold out" banner and show it off to the media. They later asked if they could still come and eat at the Via campsite.

There were some speeches that nobody listened to while most people went up to investigate the police obelisk and launch a halfhearted assault with a giant inflatable hammer. No luck. Eventually provoking the police stopped being fun when about a million of them sprung out from where they had been hiding inside a telephone booth and tried to surround the protestors, at which time everybody ran away as fast as they fucking could.

The next day the entire program was abandoned in favor of listening to Evo Morales. After many hours preparation he came and gave a speech which was mostly about US imperialism. Even more popular was the Via's decision that everybody would be allowed to keep the foam mattress that they had been given to camp on. Then it was goodbye to the ace people I'd run into at the camp and a very long bus trip, prolonged by the determination of the police to force us to detour a few hundred km out of our way.

Was it worth it? We didn't reduce climate change. We probably didn't make any difference to the deal that was done in the official conference. We didn't make any advances in developing new tactics, discourses of greater political unity. We did have a fairly fun time by the beach with friends. Just like it promises in the tourist brochures.

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collapse of radical democracy was evident not only in the inability of the crowd to act in response to the police without hierarchical leadership, and the heavily stage-managed general assembly at Trades Hall at 6:00, which took place with a heavy police guard waiting outside (as though to insinuate that they, too, could block certain motions).

"We are the 99%!"

Throughout the survival of the camp, and all through the eviction process, protestors took up the slogan of "the 99%." Analysis of the movement's political strength generally came down to what proportion of this statistic we represented. But as Hardt and Negri have recently argued, in line with their general argument of Empire-Multitude-Commonwealth, the demand for democracy made by the movement is symptomatic of "the lack – or failure – of political representation."(3). At its best, the slogan "99%" represented an awakening class consciousness (thus the uselessness of the doctrine of "the 100%", of unity with the police and a reified image of "humanity"; this language is the end of politics proper, not its transcendence). At its worst, it represented a vulgar materialist appeal to democratic legitimacy, as though there were something worth saving in the corpse of bourgeois representative democracy. We are, quite simply, the 0%: those who are precisely un-represented in the political sphere, and who thus choose to represent themselves. When we choose to move from schemas of representation to politics proper, we leave behind any idea that this is an act of protest.

"We are Occupy Melbourne!"

Beneath the outward signs of our unity, fissures are opening in the Occupy movement. Those who initially convened the protest still seek to maintain ownership over the process. Consensus-based decision-making has been perverted into a bureaucratic means of silencing minority opinion (always, always in the interests of the group: there's not enough time, the group has already reached a decision, or that's not what "we" are about, etc.). A few slogans are promoted to the point of being beyond any questioning; the assumption that they are common ground labels all criticism of them as disruptive. But as I have sought to demonstrate in those article, those slogans actually act as limits imposed on the movement by those who wish to control its potential. We must break out of the "consensus" that dictates that we are engaging in an act of civil protest within the coordinates of liberal democracy. Rather, Occupy Melbourne, and the global movement of which it is a part, are part of a process to come up with new models of social organisation beyond the limits of our current political system. The only word I can think of for such a process is revolution.

At this stage, it is vital that we learn from the lessons of our first occupation. Several issues present themselves immediately:

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3. http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/11/occupy-wall-street-as-a-fight-for-real-democracy/?hpt=hp_c2

1. The second occupation, at Flagstaff gardens, has been announced with what seems like undue haste. Remember, unlike the anti-globalisation movement, which reacted to WTO and G8 summits, we set the pace and the agenda. Perhaps it is already a political impossibility to call off the occupation, as it has the acclaim of a series of assemblies and has already been advertised, but activists would be wise not to expect different results from a repetition of the same strategy.

2. Every member of the occupation must be organised in a way that permits them to partake in political, strategic, and tactical decision-making. The most effective measure at this stage would be for individuals to form themselves into affinity groups: that is, groups of people who have the shared values, trust, and knowledge of one another to act collectively both in democratic forums and in conflicts with the police.

3. The entirety of the movement must begin a study of its tactics including safety, responses to police violence, and nonviolent resistance. Workshops can be organised on all of these subjects with little more resources than the energy of those who have past experience.

4. Tactics, of course, only become an issue in terms of an overall strategy. At the moment, the wisest strategy is not to seek conflict with the enemy, but to emphasise and build on the movement's strengths. Protesting against police behaviour is probably more effective at this stage than occupying the park right now. The fact that Sydney was crushed, if anything, more brutally in a dawn raid on Sunday shows that media coverage alone won't prevent further violence. Moreover, a lot of people were injured on the day, put in jail, lost property, lost days of work, and lost sleep over the occupation. The valiance of the leaders in sending people back to the front can only function by ignoring this reality.

5. The problems of democracy in the general assembly must be confronted and rectified. While in the moment of crisis after the eviction, the intervention of experienced leaders was probably necessary (though, again, this necessity could have been mitigated by prior discussion and planning, enforced through discipline), the general assembly has become markedly more centralised in a way that is unhealthy. A spokescouncil, comprising delegates from all participating organisations, affinity groups, and special interests (i.e. there should be queer, women's, and indigenous delegates) is one alternative model which could rectify some of the problems of the assembly, but as with all of my suggestions it is meant merely to initiate debate on the challenges we face as a movement.

sessions by barring access to the sleeping area while sessions were in progress. Westerners kicking indigenous people out of their tents to make them listen to hours of panels for their own good is not the coolest scenario. There was also a mad scramble to put together things like drainage for showers, drawing derision from the punks with their demonstration eco-bathroom, but not much help with the digging.

Despite the many failings, the Via Campesina site ended up being the biggest protest camp. They had anticipated 3 -6,000 people but ended up with 2 – 3,000. Because they had already paid for tents and catering for many more than they had, they ended up letting everybody who wanted to stay and eat for free. This alone was more than enough to lure people away from the other two protest sites, even though the food was mostly meat and transgenic corn. Because of the political diversity at the camp, from punks through to communists through to party hacks, it was an interesting enough place to be, especially while nobody was on the fucking microphone. In fact, because it was such an ace place to be there was virtually no engagement with the people living in Cancun or any street protest. Admittedly, the police had blanketed the city with propaganda saying that we protestors ate children. We ourselves had the general idea that we would be tortured to death if caught by ourselves so this didn't encourage people to go out into the world.

'THERE WAS VIRTUALLY NO ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PEOPLE LIVING IN CANCUN OR ANY STREET PROTEST'

There were street protests in Cancun. The first was on the second day of the conference to commemorate Lee's death, with a march to the very spot. There was a lot of nervousness, speeches which few people listened to and far too many journalists. Nothing much happened and we marched back to the camp.

The second and last street march was a kind of attempt to assault the Moon Palace itself. This direct assault was provoked by the fact that attempts to intervene inside the official process had failed totally. The main agreement by the heads of state, as prompted by Walmart and Rio Tinto, had been around REDD+. This is a carbon trading bonanza that commercializes indigenous land and makes indigenous peoples defacto employees of multinationals without control over their own lands. We began with a symbolic march in Cancun followed by an attempt to go by bus convoy 40km out to storm the official conference. Because the Via could only guarantee bus places for its own people, this march excluded both locals and protestors from the other sites. Shortly after departure the police cut the protest caravan in half and redirected the tail end back into the city, causing a huge traffic jam. After a couple of hours of negotiating and driving in circles the caravan reunited and continued another 10km down the road before being stopped by a second police roadblock. We got around this one by getting off the busses and walking for about half an hour before arriving at the most massive police barricade towering 10m across the highway with literally thousands of police on horses, motorbikes,

away from Cancun. They charged $5 a day for camping and the same for a meal, meaning that each day in their camp cost more than three days on the minimum Mexican wage. They had open spaces for workshops, but the program was largely empty. They anticipated 2-3000 people and ended up with at most 200. In the end, it was reserved for meditation, yoga and bongos.

The Espacio Dialogo Mexicano came from an early split with Klimaforum. They disagreed with the decision to negotiate with the Mexican state and thought that the organisational processes and political assumptions imported from Copenhagen clashed with the reality in Mexico. There is very little faith in the government in Mexico. Espacio's decision to split with Klimaforum was part of why Klimaforum ended up an enclave for foreigners. Espacio made a real effort to work across different groups and had open spaces for workshops and small group activities. They expected 3,000 people and ended up with about 300. Because they had prepared infrastructure for many more people than were there they put the squeeze on for money. Many of the speakers at Espacio were also on stage with the Via.

Via Campesina was the least DIY of all the organisations. Its staff were paid and it contracted commercially for food, tents, lighting, sound and seating. It decided to work apart from the other groups because it planned for the Cancun protests to be an opportunity to strengthen its organization as a network and to establish itself as a presence in the climate change movement. There was some sort of relationship between the Via and the Morales government of Bolivia, as a private plane load full of Bolivian musicians and activists was around the campground and Evo himself came to speak on the last day. As well as the campground, the Via hired out a hotel in the tourist zone of Cancun for delegates and volunteers above a certain level. Many of the decisions were made at this hotel between leaders of the different member organisations, bureaucrats and other people who I was never able to identify. The organization itself may (or may not) have been democratic but the structure of the protest camp was totally obscure The sports ground where the Via campgrounds were was about 40km from the Moon Palace [where the conference was being held- Eds.] and the government, but in downtown Cancun.

The format of its event was a single large assembly with blocks of speakers holding the platform for a couple of hours at a time, followed by a few minutes of questions. Each morning there was an indigenous ceremony led by a different group, often poorly attended. In fact, many sessions were badly attended. A crew of volunteers, mostly foreigners, tried to make things run in accordance with the wishes of the higher-ups. Sometimes the wishes of the higher-ups were a bit weird. There was a brief attempt to force people to go to the

Against conspiracy theories:
Why our activism must be based in reality

The following talk was given by Asher as part of a workshop at Occupy Wellington.

Kia ora kotou, thanks everyone for coming. [… I] want to make it clear that I'm not here today to debunk or debate any specific conspiracy theory [...] What I want to [talk about is] why our activism must be based in reality. So we'll be talking about the whole conspiracy world-view, we'll be talking about what I think is a much better alternative to that, but I'm not going to sit here and argue with you over whether the Government is secretly poisoning us from the skies, or whether shape-shifting reptilian lizards are controlling our lives...

[…A] conspiracy theory is a theory based in supposition, one that flies in the face of evidence or science, often one that claims its correctness can be shown by the paucity of evidence in favour of it, in the sense that 'this conspiracy goes so far that they've even buried all the evidence that proves it!' Conspiracy theories often encourage an 'us few enlightened folk versus everyone else' world view. This creates an atmosphere where conspiracy theorists look down on people, or sheeple as they are often called, and ignores the fact that people, by and large, are actually pretty intelligent. In and of itself this world-view is hugely problematic, for as I will discuss later, mass social change requires the participation of the masses and therefore we have to have faith in the ability of people to decide things for themselves, to come to correct conclusions and ultimately to change the world.

Why am I interested in conspiracy theories, or at least arguing against them? Firstly, because I'm passionate about science and rationality, and I find it fascinating how and when these things are ignored.

Secondly, because I'm Jewish, and many conspiracy theories are antisemitic – whether directly and obviously (eg: Jews run the world, or the media, or the banks). Sometimes its more subtle – people might not talk about Jews explicitly but they may use Zionist as a code word, or talk about the Rothschilds, or an elite cabal of shadowy bankers who all coincidentally have Jewish surnames.

Lastly, I'm interested in conspiracy theories because I want radical social change, and to have radical social change, we need to have an understanding of how society actually works.

We are here at Occupy because we want to see change. What we want differs: some want new regulations on the financial sector, others want to change taxes or the minimum wage, while others still want to destroy capitalism and bring in a new form of production and distribution. Regardless of which of these boxes you fit

in, if you fit in any of them at all, we all want change.

We're also here because we know we can't simply rely on Government to benevolently grant us the changes we desire. If we believed that, we'd sit at home and wait for the Government to give us these gifts. We're here because we know that those with power won't give it up lightly, and that it is only through our collective strength that we can win reforms, or create revolution.

But what do I mean when I say 'our collective strength'? I think it's important to clarify who is contained within the word 'our'. While people involved in the Occupy movements around the globe frequently refer to it as the 99%, I actually think that's a really imprecise term. So, instead, I refer to the working class. When they hear the term working class, some people think simply of male factory workers, but this is not what I mean. The working class is not limited to blue collar workers in factories, but instead it includes all of us who are forced to sell our labour power to survive. This includes people who are in paid employment, whether in a factory, office, café or retail store. It also includes those who are unable to find paid employment, or have chosen to refuse the drudgery of paid work in order to attempt to live on the meagre benefits supplied by the state, and who provide a vast potential pool of labour that enables the ruling class to further keep wages down. The working class includes stay at home parents, doing vital unpaid work to raise the next generation of human beings. It includes people who are too sick or unable to work for other reasons. In short, if you don´t own a business, if you aren't part of the Government, if you aren't independently wealthy (such as from an inheritance), then chances are you are a part of the working class that I'm talking about, this collective 'our'.

If we agree that we can't simply rely on Government to benevolently grant us gifts, and that we need to fight for it using our numbers and our power, then it becomes necessary to understand how society is structured and how capitalism actually functions, in order to know where our collective strength comes from, where we have the most power, and where we need to apply the metaphorical blowtorch.

So, why are conspiracy theories not helpful here? Why are conspiracy theories not useful for developing that understanding? There's a variety of reasons.

Some conspiracy theories, such as those around 9/11, even if they were true, which I don't believe they are, would only tell us "Governments do bad things". That's not actually news to anyone. We know that the British Crown & the New Zealand Government stole vast tracts of land from Maori. We know that the Crown and the Australian Government engaged in genocidal acts against Australian aborigines. We know that Governments the world over have repeatedly sent people overseas to fight, kill and die in wars. There's so, so much more, but to cut a long story short, everybody knows that sometimes Governments do bad things.

summit protests. In 2003 South Korean farmer Kim Lee stabbed himself on top of a police barricade as a form of protest. With his death he sought to communicate the pain of farmers to decision makers and appeal to their humanity. They had little. Given that protesters were good enough to stab themselves the police were remarkably gentle in their treatment of protestors. At COP16 in 2010 an anarcho-punk contingent painted their bus with Lee's image without considering that the target and form of his protest contradicted their own direct action ethos. Even those who knew that goodwill plays no part in politics saw no other option than to appeal to power. The police massively overwhelmed the protestors to the extent that there were very few incidents of police violence. The climate movement completed the trajectory of the 8 year anti-globalization upsurge in just two years and ended up stuck at the same point.

The coalition of protestors at COP16 was not tightly organized. I wasn't involved with the vegan disciples of the supreme master [global cult advocating veganism-Eds] or the big NGOs like Greenpeace and Oxfam which were doing their media stunts. I also wasn't involved in any of the youth or civil society organizations that were allowed inside the venue, sort of. I'll talk about the protest coalition that emerged between COP15 and 16 and was on the streets in Cancun, kind of. I'll start furthest out from the Via and then work my way in.

The largest and most militant campesino organization in Mexico is the National Indigenous Congress, of which prominent members are the Zapatistas. The Zapatistas are a 10 000 strong guerilla army with autonomous territory in the state of Chiapas. Different groups in the Congress tried to get away from the pitched battle in Cancun by organizing events elsewhere. The People's Front in Defence of the Earth (FPDT) called a gathering in defense of the land in Atenco, near Mexico City, in November. This was followed by a gathering in defense of water in Yaqui territory in the North of Mexico, about 3000km distant from Cancun. Many people who ended up working with the Via travelled up to this gathering from Chiapas then followed on with another massive bus trip to Cancun- like going from Melbourne to Perth to Brisbane. These gatherings didn't make much of an impact because they were small, attracted little attention and because conflict between indigenous groups in Oaxaca, both aligned with the Congreso, pushed its way on to centre stage. At Cancun the only reference to the Zapatistas and the National Indigenous Congress was the odd t-shirt or slogan. Only the FPDT managed to cross sectarian lines, much to their credit.

Anarchists, particularly anarcho-punks with a DIY ethic mobilized in Mexico City and Oaxaca. Their anti-C@P position was that both CAPitalism and the COP process were part of the problem. Interestingly, only the anti-COP position was contentious on the ground. The punks looked to collaborate with another group while maintaining their autonomy. It seemed like their only hope in a city totally flooded by machine gun wielding security agents. They ended up inside the Via Campesina campsite.

Directly from COP15 came the Klimaforum. This group negotiated with the Mexican government for a space and ended up getting a polo club some 40km

carbon trading at COP16 advanced business agreements barley related to connected to the reduction of CO2 levels in the atmosphere. It also ignored the probability that it is already too late for making reductions and the necessity to prepare for the climate suffering which will most affect the poor.

Western governments were not the only ones in Cancun out to make some money. Heads of state from the global South arrived more than ready to make a deal. The President of tiny island state Kiribati has been one of the most outspoken advocates for carbon reduction. His palace and the gigantic seawall mined from coral reefs which protects it have been paid for by the West. The thousands of tourists who come by jet to enjoy air conditioning and imported food come from the West. The president knows on which side his bread is buttered. Like many others, he was in Cancun to make some money.

Bolivia was not in Cancun to make money. It is unclear if it was there to avert climate catastrophe. Its failed effort to mandate a reduction of carbon in the atmosphere to pre-industrial levels was at odds with the expansion of its own natural gas industry. Its calls for an open process contradicted its efforts to shut down a discussion of its natural gas production at Cochabamba [World People's conference on climate change held in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2010-eds.]. Its claim to champion the interests of the third world proved more figurative than literal as most small states sold their signatures to the highest bidder, which Bolivia was not. It seems that Bolivia set itself up to lead a groundswell of popular mobilization demanding action on climate change and to channel that energy along lines of climate justice as determined by Bolivia itself. The Bolivian state, or in fact any state, may or may not be the right entity to lead such a movement. At the moment this question remains theoretical as such a movement did not exist in Cancun.

The impetus to protest at the COP16 summit came directly from the COP15 Copenhagen summit. Many participants moved from one to the other. Copenhagen itself represented little that was new in terms of protest, instead being a revival of the summit protests that formed part of the ant-globalization upsurge from 1994-2001. Copenhagen did not seem to be a development of the summit protest model. In terms of form, Copenhagen included music, puppets, theatre and the spectacle of a myriad of different interest groups converging with a common goal. However that goal seemed ill-defined even in comparison to the WTO protests of the 1990s. While there were some militant anti-capitalists, equally there were many who believed that the elites making the decisions needed only good information to do the right thing. A consensus was probably that the COP process could and would work given sufficient goodwill. People were surprised by the level of policing and the extent of the political sell-out, which is in turn surprising given the experience of other summit protests.

'Western Governments were not the only ones in Cancun out to make some money'

It is interesting that Cancun was the site of one of the last of the anti-globalisation

So theories that only serve to prove that, even if they were true, aren't actually particularly useful.

Some conspiracy theories are simply bizarre and the logical conclusions from them don't fit with what their believers do. If you actually believed that the majority of people in power around the world [were] blood-sucking shape-shifting reptilians from another solar system, then you wouldn't limit your activity to promoting one guy's book tours around the globe and chatting with other believers on the internet.

Conspiracy theories often feed on people's mistrust and their fear. They claim to provide simple answers to complicated questions, but actually when you examine them in detail they're highly complex themselves. For example, with 9/11, it seems like a simple solution to say 'it was an inside job by the US Government'. But actually, when you look into what would be required for this to be true, the thousands upon thousands of people who would need to be lying, it becomes incredibly implausible.

Some conspiracy theories, such as many of the shadowy financial cabal conspiracies, only serve to mystify capitalism and falsely suggest a level of control that doesn't actually exist. Additionally, they remove any sense of our own power, whether real or potential. A theory which suggests such overwhelming power and control over the entire way we live our lives is actually a catalyst for inaction – if a group has such a high level of control over everything, then there's not really anything we can do about it. On the contrary, capitalism is not a static system, it is dynamic and changing and constantly adapts in response to threats. The threat of working class power has resulted in a number of changes to the functioning of capitalism over time, including the introduction of Keynesian and Neoliberal economics in the late 1930s and 1970s respectively.

Even if conspiracy theories can sometimes seem relatively harmless on the surface, they play a role of absorbing us into a fictional world, somewhat like a dungeons and dragons enthusiast. Once you are in this fictional world, it becomes really easy to get lost in it and to be defensive when challenged, even when challenged on a logical, rational basis.

I'll quote British political blogger Jack Ray:

> The trouble with conspiracy theories is that they're all rendered pointless by one fundamental, unarguable element of capitalism[...] Whatever else you have to say about [capitalism], positive or negative, [it is] a system of elites. It has elitism coded into it´s DNA, from the smallest company, to the largest multinational, from the political system to the culture. It's purpose is to promote elites. It does this legitimately within the logic of the system. It does this publicly, lording super-capitalists like Bill Gates or even for a time, Enron boss Ken Lay. It lays its theories of elitism out for all to see, in policy projects, in university research, through political theorists.
>
> It has no interest in secret cabals, or conspiracies. It has no need for them. It is a system openly, and publicly, run by elites. They might go home at night and secretly dine with their illuminati, lizard-jew, Bilderberg Group friends, and laugh about how they've taken over the world. It doesn't matter to me or you whether they do or not. They are the

elite, and we can see who they are and how they live their lives. People know that we live in a system of elites, [who act in their own] interests, according to the logic of the society they dominate. Everyone who looks around know this. We don't need internet documentaries to tell us that we're dominated, we just need to go to work, or walk through a posh neighbourhood or have a run-in with any politicians, big businessman or even a celebrity to know that. What we need are weapons, ways of challenging that domination, so maybe we don't have to live under it forever.

So what is the alternative to this conspiracist world-view? For that, we need to look at history. The history of how social change comes about is not always easy to find. It suits those in power to downplay the role of mass movements, so the dominant narrative is often one that ignores the long term grassroots organising that has happened, and simply focuses on legislative change enacted by the Government of the day. But a people's history is out there – often in the form of first hand accounts by those who took part in these movements, such as those for homosexual law reform, or the 1970s strike wave across New Zealand, of the movement against native forest logging and so on.

One thing, from looking at this history, is abundantly clear. Mass action is vital for mass change. If you look through history, time and time again, it is when large groups of people have got together and shown themselves to be a threat to those in power that concessions have been granted. This happens on a small scale as well as a big one – when all 10 employees at a small business go on strike and refuse to work until their boss gives them a pay rise, the boss is forced to listen.

From this example, it becomes obvious that it isn't simply numbers alone that allow us to exercise power. It is also using those numbers strategically to hit those in power where it hurts. As workers, we create wealth for the bosses each and every day at our jobs. Some of this wealth is returned to us in the form of wages, but much is stolen. This stolen wealth is often called ¨surplus value¨. It is the accumulation of surplus value, stolen by our bosses, that forms the wealth of the ruling class. But because the goods and services that create this surplus value ultimately come from our hands and our brains, through collectively withdrawing our labour, we can force the bosses to give in to our demands.

> "If you open your mind too much, your brain will fall out".

So taking collective action [in] the workplace is one way we can impose our power on the bosses to help us better meet our needs and desires. And if we extrapolate this to larger numbers of work-sites, to larger numbers of people both employed and unemployed, then we can begin to see how we can make changes to the functioning of society as a whole.

To finish things off, I want to emphasise that while it is important to have an open mind, this must be tempered with a commitment to rationality and the examining of evidence. Or, to quote Australian sceptic and comedian Tim Minchin, "If you open your mind too much, your brain will fall out".

Cancun, December 2010

This is a reflection on the December 2010 protests in Cancun, Mexico at the 16th Conference of Parties (COP16). The COP conferences are the main forum at which governments negotiate a collective response to climate change. Because governments can't be trusted, these conferences are accompanied by protests.

I went along as part of a translation team put together by an international network of campesino organisations called La Via Campesina (the way of the peasant farmer). Two non-Mexican Via employees were based in Chiapas, Mexico. They recruited from among the people they knew, including my housemates, and I ended up as part of the translator team. Before becoming a translator I wasn't thinking of going to Cancun. I didn't think that the protests would be very useful. The scientific consensus is that 350ppm Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere is the target level to avert catastrophic climate change. We are currently over 394ppm and rising. Only economic collapse in the US, Eastern Europe, Spain and Greece gives the West some small chance of reaching the inadequate targets spelt out in the Kyoto Protocol. Since 2000 over three trillion dollars have been investedin reversing economic collapse, perhaps fifty times the total global investment in studying, mitigating and preparing for climate change. Governments are making no serious attempts to achieve the 350ppm target. The city of Cancun prepared for the arrival of protestors making this point with a propaganda campaign against them and thousands of heavily armed police.

Most states came to Cancun to do business. The relationship between climate talks and business is called carbon trading. Carbon trading is based on the targets for carbon emission reduction spelled out in the Kyoto protocol, a treaty in which governments have agreed to limit their emissions to certain levels. There are penalties for states exceeding their emissions quotas. These penalties can be avoided by 'offsetting' emissions or by buying unused carbon quotas from other states. Carbon trading does not reduce the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere. Offsetting can mean investing in carbon sinks including forests on indigenous land. Sinks absorb carbon from the atmosphere whether or not they appear in the portfolio of multinational corporations. The sale by low-emissions countries, invariably poor, of their unfulfilled carbon quotas to industrialized countries perpetuates structural inequality. This is because selling carbon quotas takes the place of developing an autonomous industrial base. Poor countries continue to be dependent on imports so industrialized countries quickly recover their outlay and more. Worse, carbon quotas can be paid for through foreign aid and carbon reduction budget allocations of rich countries, effectively using this money to subsidize carbon emissions. Negotiating

A Better Squat Eviction

For 3 months some homeless students, anarchists & workers had been squatting the massive 3 story St Michael's Cathedral in Darlington, Sydney and had plans to turn it into a social centre and accessible accommodation. The occupiers had been able to build a properly functioning kitchen for community dinners, had rigged the electricity to provide lighting and fixed many of the rooms to create a liveable space out of a building that had been empty for some 7 years or so.

On September 14, security guards employed by the catholic church, who claims ownership over the building, discovered that there were people living in the cathedral. they lied to the occupiers about a number of issues, most importantly promising that they would open up lines of communication with the arch diosese. Instead they immediately called the police creating a confusing and more vulnerable situation for those living there.

The building was considered by the squatters to be in a prime location for a social centre. It is easily accessed by public transport, close to the city, on a major roadway on Sydney University property and it could have housed up to 50 people. After putting so much work into the building for so long the squatters did not want to leave without a fight. They barricaded the doors, stairs and ground floor windows, attempting to making it as hard as possible for the state to make this insurrection go away. The resistance was made as public as possible, there were multiple banners dropped from the building and surrounding areas, mainstream media were contacted and calls for solidarity were made to the anarcho squatting community (and wider). The emphasis was on making links between everyone's housing crisis. All renters, and mortgagees are subjected to decisions on their living situations without their consent and squatting is no different.

On the day of the eviction, the squatters woke to find that they were surrounded by police and security guards, so they occupied the roof where they would be most visible. The location of the premises was on a popular student route to the main grounds of Sydney University and, ironically, the spectacle of the police attack on the people on the roof brought many supporters along (almost 1000) to observe what was happening.

After many hours, the police removed the 7 squatters off the roof and charged them with entering without permission on the premises. Beyond this, two others were charged, one with retrospective trespass, and the other for behaviour on the street below.

Currently all those arrested are in the process of dealing with their court cases. They are calling for the courts to drop the charges against them. This process will probably last until the end of the year, wearing those individuals out unless we who politically support actions like this can provide effective political solidarity with them.

The biggest thing is that once again, some more people have lost their homes. Usually this is an invisible part of capitalism. The beauty of this occupation was in the highly visible resistance to the state and church. Housing struggles aren't just the concern of squatters. Renters are forced to pay week by week to live in houses that the owner refuses to upkeep and can have their rent increased until they are unable to afford it. Mortgagees can have their homes repossessed at the banks' whim. Our homes need to be our own. It's time for more empty buildings to be made liveable, it's time for rent strikes, it's time to smash the banks into rubble and it's time to occupy our town centres. It has been for a long time.

anarchists & anti-authoritarians

"Corporate greed," or just plain old capitalism?

Printed here is 'a pamphlet made for participants in the "Occupy" aka "99%" movement, explaining why the problem is not "corporate greed," but capitalism, and what is meant by capitalism, crisis, anti-capitalist struggle, and "occupation" in a (libertarian) Marxist sense.' Taken from libcom.org

The **"99% Movement"** has adopted the term **"occupy"** from the **anti-capitalist** tradition, in which people have occupied workplaces, neighborhoods, school buildings, etc., as moves toward taking control over the "means of production" in order to make things and share them, "from each according to ability, to each according to need," without the mediation of money. However, starting with the original Adbusters call, an influential current within the movement has suppressed this history, treating "occupation" as a temporary and symbolic means of petitioning the government to crack down on "corporate greed" and "corruption." As anti-capitalists, we oppose such reformism not because we're attached to some "radical" identity, and certainly not out of nostalgia for the old "socialist" movements (whether of Stalinist or social democratic varieties – both ended up producing only different forms of capitalism). It is simply that the reformist agenda has failed repeatedly. (Anti-capitalist movements, on the other hand, from the Paris Commune of 1871 to the present, have only been defeated, or undermined by confusion; prior to defeat, they have shown some promising beginnings.) Reformism has failed because any meaningful pro-worker **regulations eventually become fetters to capital's health, so it becomes necessary to dismantle them** - to "save the economy" (i.e. capitalism). That's what we're experiencing now, and a return to more regulation, more taxing of the rich to fund social services, etc., is something capital cannot afford without first restoring the rate of profit, which (if possible) would require more of the same: rising unemployment, falling wages, cuts to public goods and services, and the acceleration of energy wars and environmental devastation, bringing us ever closer to catastrophe. So r**eformism is "utopian"; the only "realistic" way out of this mess is the path we have yet to forge.**

What do we mean by the term "capitalism" as opposed to "corporate greed"? Capitalism is a system of production whose roots could be found in commercial activities throughout the ancient and medieval world, but which came into its own in early modern Western Europe, hand in hand with the transformation of medieval kingdoms and empires into the modern system nation-states (16th to 19th centuries), which has always been inseparable from capitalism. (As Marx put it, **the modern state is "essentially a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie as a whole.")** These states established the preconditions for capitalist development by plundering the Americas, Africa and Asia, and setting up colonial regimes there, which were eventually taken over by local elites and used to administer their own capitalist development (often under the banner of "socialism"). By the mid-19th century, capitalism had become the dominant

force globally, compelling "all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; ... to introduce what it calls 'civilization' into their midst..." This "civilization" could be analyzed into the following intertwined aspects:

(1) Two basic social classes: **proletariat** and **bourgeoisie**

a. We **proles** (mainly dispossessed peasants and their descendants) have no (legal) way to survive except by renting ourselves out as **workers.**

b. The **bourgeois** have no aristocratic position that would entitle them to tribute, etc.; all they have is **money,** and the magic to make it grow - by exploiting us **proles**

(2) A system of **commodity*** exchange invading all spheres of life, with **money** as the universal commodity (everything has a price, so you can get anything with enough money, and nothing without it)

***Commodity:** something produced for exchange rather than for direct use, tribute or gift-giving

3) The **immediate process of capitalist production**

a. **Industrial capitalists** (from the bourgeoisie) **invest** money (known as **capital***) to rent land and buildings, buy machinery and raw materials, and hire proles to produce **C**ommodities for sale – not because capitalists want **M**oney to buy other **C**ommodities (the traditional logic of commodity exchange, **C-M-C**), but in order to make a **profit**, that is, more money than was originally invested (**M-C-M'**).

***Capital:** *money invested in order to get more money; "**dead labor,** that **vampire**-like, lives only by sucking **living labor**, and lives [...] the more labor it sucks"* (Marx, Capital, vol. 1, chapter 10).

b. This trick is possible because **the capitalist pays us for only part of the value we produce.** For example, a prole named Lori works 8 hours for $10/hour, assembling hamburgers at McDonald's. The 400 hamburgers she makes during those 8 hours sell for $2000. The beef, buns and other materials cost $1000, and the utilities, wear and tear on equipment, and other expenses cost another $900, totaling $1900. So Lori's labor added $100 worth of value to those materials, but she was paid only $80, so Mr. McDonald made $20 net profit from the unpaid portion of Lori's labor that day. If there are 10 employees per shift working at the same average rate of exploitation, and two shifts per day, then Mr. McDonald nets $400 each day from that store, $12,000 per month.

c. So right at the point of production, there is an **irreconcilable contradiction between capital and the labor necessary for capital's growth.** Our interests are fundamentally opposed: the longer and harder we work, the more profit the boss makes, and vice versa: if we try to lighten our work load, whether in time or intensity, or if we demand higher wages or safer conditions, we cut into the boss's profit. This contradiction cannot be resolved through compromise, since **capital will die if it doesn't grow**, and capital can grow only by "sucking" more "living labor" from workers. This is the basic logic of capitalist investment, M-C-M': capitalists don't invest in order to exchange their assets for something they want to use, but in order for their money to give birth to more money, and if it doesn't do that, they may as well sell their assets and buy a tropical island. At the same time, competition with other companies forces them to **constantly increase the rate of exploitation** – either by making us work harder or longer, or by switching to new equipment that can not enough to live on! And then we are further attacked. The moral panic whipped up by Sarrazin (a far-right politician), where he accuses people like us of being lazy freeloaders and parasites on society, is gaining support.

Q: So the Superfluous Ones are the 'social parasites' we've heard so much about from Sarrazin?

Yes, you could say that. But we are also much more. For example, the refugees that are put in detention and expected to live on food vouchers. Through their voucher-strike in Henningsdorf (suburb of Berlin), they too are right now raising their voices against this exclusion. We are all those who, in our society, are viewed as unnecessary, because we don't comply with their requirements for profit-making.

We are the ones whose mouths they want to gag – but they won't manage it. We are many and we can be very, very loud; preferably exactly in those places where they don't want to hear us. For example, in the Job Centres, luxury restaurants – or at the Press Conference for the Overview of rent increases.

Superfluous Manifesto – taken from www.die-ueberfluessigen.net

"The Superfluous Ones wear tracksuits, as they expect a lot of movement. The Superfluous place white masks over their faces, as many fighting activists do the world over. Their respect and affinity goes to the Sans Papiers [undocumented migrants] to the women on strike in world market factories, to the precarious, to the invisibles… The Superfluous Ones are in solidarity with those on the move to wherever hardship and hope drive them, and who constantly have to invent their livelihood out of nothing. The Superfluous are everywhere and without boundaries, as capitalist exploitation is itself.

The Superfluous are people in the industrial states, who have been excluded from society´s wealth. They are those targeted by the class war from above and the current poverty-campaigns: they are the unemployed whose rights get abolished more and more, they are the refugees ruled by racist immigration laws, they are the single mothers pushed into low-paid jobs, they are the old who have to beg for winter shoes in the welfare office, they are the sick who can not afford treatment.

The Superfluous see the cause of their situation in a system fanatical about profit, which doesn't render unpleasant work superfluous, but rather human beings. Jointly they stand up to defy the coercion to adjust oneself ever more thoroughly, for being allowed to survive.

The Superfluous do not accept any longer being reduced to waste-products of capitalism. They're fed up with tearing each other to pieces in competition for the crumbs tossed by the system.

The Superfluous break out of the 2-room-couch-tv-cages and run their own program.

The Superfluous smile to each other while storming towards the strongholds of the fundamentalists of capital – as they have a whole world to win."

understood as everyone whose only source of wealth is our capacity to work for wages. While capitalism routinely throws people onto the human scrap heap, their existence deemed "irrelevant" or superfluous to its requirements, it wants to see those very people, and all of us besides, competing more to work harder for less. It hates the idea that we might have other plans, that we might refuse and run our own show (or move to take over the show entirely).

And this is where the Superflous Ones come in. The hysteria and slander against 'bludgers' whipped up by media and politicians is just as frenzied in Germany - and they laugh in its face. They offer us an example of what defiance can look like. In their attitude of refusal to be shamed, of solidarity "from below" with all those on the wrong end of capitalism's stick, and their bold actions against the perpetrators of misery, all the while they loudly declare: "we regret nothing!"

The following interview is adapted from the German original, which appeared in the radical mag Anti-Berliner, published y the group Anti-Fascist Left Berlin. It relates to their disruption of the Press Conference by the Senator for City Development in Berlin, as she presented the official Overview of rent rises across the city, on May 30th this year].

Q:Why storm this press conference? What's so bad about an overview of how much rents cost across the city's districts?

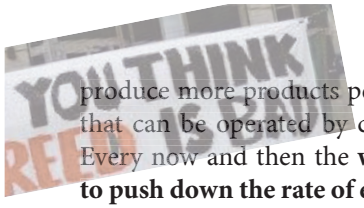
Well, it's not so harmless as that. The overview is not an impartial look at developments in different districts. The affordable, older leases are not taken into account. The Overview presents rent hikes as legitimate. It makes clear that simply living is constantly becoming more expensive. That is a form of exclusion: because we can't afford the housing any more, we're driven out of our neighbourhoods. But we like where we live, and want to stay. We won't leave the inner-city to fat cats and speculators. For that reason, we stormed the stage at the press conference. We couldn't let the Senator tell the journalists in all tranquility how great development is and how fantastically property prices are skyrocketing in various urban hotspots! Rising rents are something we simply can't afford anymore. So, enough of that!

Q:You always wear masks. Why?

As far as people are concerned, capitalism is interested only in their mere labour-power. In its eyes, people exist as a faceless and exploitable resource. One's measure of worth is understood only in terms of exploitability. The human person is no longer relevant, we are only perceived as a faceless mass – and so our masks. We stand for people the world over who are impacted by poverty and exploitation. For refugees just as much as for the single mothers who have to battle through on low-wage jobs.

Q: What do you struggle against?

We want to make people aware of the different forms of oppression and exclusion. Social exclusion happens every day to so many of us, for example in the Job Centre [similar to Centrelink and Job Network], where we are belittled by the bureaucrats, when we won't put up with every last thing. Or when we have to take some dreadful job where the pay is by far



produce more products per labor-hour, or that can be operated by cheaper workers. Every now and then the **workers manage to push down the rate of exploitation**, but when that is limited to one firm, it threatens the firm with bankruptcy (since other firms in the same industry are continuing to operate at a higher rate); when workers push down the rate of exploitation for a whole industry, capital floods out of that industry in search of more profitable opportunities, leading to mass layoffs (as we've seen with the auto industry); when it affects the system as a whole, we have a **crisis**, which is *capital's way of trying to restore the* ***rate of profit.***

(4) Dog-eat-dog c**ompetition among capitalists** on a (free or regulated) market.

This is why subjective attitudes like **greed** are irrelevant: even if an entrepreneur happens to be Mother Teresa, and her whole reason for going into business is to create humane jobs, do "green" production, and give to charity, either her products are limited to a tiny niche market for rich people trying to assuage their guilty consciences (like the "fair trade" market), or more likely, her products are undersold by other companies that pay their workers slightly less, or pollute a little more. She is forced to follow their example or go bankrupt. **No amount of government regulation can fundamentally change this**: such regulation cuts directly into profit, so there is always a tug of war between capitalists and anyone who tries to regulate the market by raising the minimum wage, improving environmental protection standards, etc. This tug of war is really a *displacement of the* ***class war between capital and labor:*** the state and most official "labor" organizations are just responding to, or trying to preempt, widespread proletarian resistance, and as mentioned above, this war cannot end in a truce: capital must keep pushing back to restore the rate of profit, which means undoing previously made regulations.

(5) **Endlessly expanding reproduction & crisis**

Not only is capital like a vampire; it's also like a **cancer,** since it must constantly expand and multiply. Once a capitalist makes profit, he's got to make another investment – either in expanding the same firm, or starting a new one. Even if he just puts his profit into the **bank**, the bank's got to lend it to another capitalist, or the bank would go out of business. This is why we can't blame the crisis on banks, or **Wall Street** for that matter: *without banks or the stock exchange, industrial capitalists wouldn't be able to come up with enough money to buy the expensive facilities necessary to survive in competition with other firms.* At the same time, **financial institutions can't survive without constantly making loans and investments,** and when there are no profitable opportunities, either there is a **crisis,** or financiers start inventing ways to make profits on paper (hedge funds, etc.) – until someone figures out there's not enough production and consumption going on to back it up. And this is obviously NOT because everyone has all the products they need or want; a sixth of the world's population is chronically malnourished, and yet fields lie fallow, farm equipment stands unused, and ridiculous amounts of food are thrown away every day. The reason is that people don't have enough money to buy the products, and this is because companies won't hire them (or if they do, the wages are too low), and this in turn because it wouldn't be profitable for the companies to expand, since they

couldn't sell any more products at a profitable price...

This crisis will not end until the rate of profit is restored, which would require:

(1) the rate of exploitation to increase considerably, and since it's hard to imagine how we could survive the stress of working any harder or longer than we're already working, the main way to increase the rate of exploitation would be by **continuing to lay off workers and cut wages** – including the **social wage**, made up of welfare benefits, public transit, homeless shelters, etc. (paid indirectly by capitalists to proles via taxes and donation to non-profits);

(2) the liquidation of old capital, including products that can't be sold profitably, obsolescent fixed capital (machines, etc.), and **fictitious capital** (that is, *paper claims to wealth above the actual value of the commodities to which they originally referred* - value that is always falling due to technological development, while paper claims to that value, once sold on in a different form, are not written down until a financial crunch; historically, **war** has been an important way old capital is liquidated);

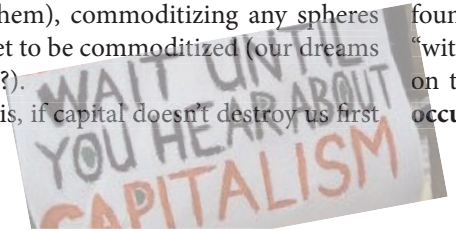
(3) continuing to cut the cost of production by plundering land, water, and other "resources" from the world's few remaining peasant communities with anything left to steal, and by mining the bodies of humans and other animals for "resources" such as organs, plasma, DNA…; and

(4) the opening of new markets (on Mars?), and the continued creation of new lines of products (for those who can afford them), commoditizing any spheres of life yet to be commoditized (our dreams perhaps?).

That is, if capital doesn't destroy us first through military or ecological apocalypse... Or if we don't end the reign of capital by **turning this movement of "'Occupy' protests" into a movement to occupy the means of production .**

Throughout the 19th century, capital restored its rate of profit about every decade through a crisis of two or three years. In the early 20th century, imperialist expansion postponed crisis until the great crash of 1929. **It then took a decade of depression and the most devastating war in human history** to liquidate enough old capital, plunder enough "resources," and open up enough new markets to restore the rate of profit, creating the conditions for the **Golden Age of both capitalist growth and pro-working-class regulation,** from 1945 to about 1970. Don't forget **it was at the end of this boom, in 1968,** that relatively "privileged" workers and students throughout the First World erupted in r**evolt against the spiritual poverty of capitalist prosperity**, and against "work" itself. That was the best life has been under capitalism for many of those who brought France close to revolution; **that is about the best reformism can hope for,** and we probably wouldn't survive to see even a return to that.

If the 99% Movement fails to produce the revolution we need, don't lose hope! At least we're finally coming together, building networks for future struggles, figuring out what doesn't work, and learning to cooperate, inclusively and democratically, to take things, make things and share them **without the mediation of money, political parties or the state** - building foundations for a new, truly free society "within the shell of the old." Now let's move on to a **permanent global strike** and the **occupation of everything for everyone!**



Precarious Superheroes: The 'Superfluous Ones' Strike Back!

by Annette Maguire

[Superfluous, adj. 1. exceeding what is sufficient or required. 2. not necessary or relevant, uncalled for.]

They wear white masks and red hoodies, and they turn up where they're not invited. The Superfluous Ones storm luxury restaurants and eat from the plates of the rich. They liberate food from expensive organic supermarkets to give it away free. The collective known as the Superfluous Ones has been disrupting business-as-usual in various parts of Germany for some 5 years. They wake up nasty politicians, disrupt neoliberal festivities in city and university, and occupy the workplaces of anti-social bureaucrats. They hold actions in 'Job Centres' (like the Job Network in Australia), and fight against temporary jobs and racist discrimination.

Most recently, they stormed the stage at the Press Conference by the Senator for City Development in Berlin, as she presented the official Overview of rent increases across the city, on May 30th this year. An interview about this action appears below.

But first, some local context. Germany might seem like a long way away. But the issues are surprisingly familiar right at home. As canny Mutiny readers no doubt know, the Australian government is currently unleashing a massive assault on the unemployed and the welfare-benefits system as a whole.

It goes way beyond the compulsory "income management" imposed through the dreaded BasicsCard, which has been rolled-out to apply to unemployed people across the country, after first being inflicted on Aboriginal people in the NT for the past four years. (This policy puts half a person's welfare payment on a card that can only be used in some big chain stores to buy certain items, causing untold suffering in the NT). The changes encompass heavier "breach" penalties, including suspension of the entire unemployed (Newstart) payment for missing an appointment. It means restricted access to the Disability Support Pension (DSP), and more pointless busy-work being imposed on Newstart and DSP recipients. (For full details, check out: assemblyfordignity.wordpress.com/)

Hand-in-hand with this government onslaught is the corny but relentless unemployed-bashing hysteria served up by the corporate media. Going by the comments section on assorted news websites, the past few decades of neo-liberal brainwashing and actual decimation of people's lives, have borne the ugly fruit of hatred amongst sections of the populace towards the downtrodden, the "unproductive", and worst of all, the "bludgers" who apparently refuse to fulfil their hallowed duty of working a job.

Never mind the fact that capitalism creates unemployment structurally, and that "profitable work" (work that bosses will pay for) doesn't match up with the desires, skills and talents of growing numbers of people.

The underlying thrust of the government onslaught and associated media 'moral panic' is ultimately aimed at enforcing a way of life. Namely, a life of work – low-paid, unpaid, as much of it as possible, and preferably with maximum compliance to the demands of capital. What's more, this enforcement applies not just to those at the fringes of the workforce, but across the workforce as a whole, or more accurately the working class –